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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - JANUARY 27

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¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Joint Plan Briefing

¶2. (SBU) MONUC reported that GDRC representatives (FARDC Chief of Staff Didier Etumba and Police Inspector and DRC coordinator of the joint operation John Numbi) and a senior RDF commander briefed SRSG Doss and MONUC Force Commander Gaye January 26 on the joint plan for anti-FDLR operations. MONUC described the briefing as vague, implying that the Congolese and Rwandan briefers did not share all details of the plan.

¶3. (SBU) The briefers stated the two phase plan has three goals: the destruction of the FDLR, the implementation of the Nairobi Communique, and support for the repatriation of FDLR elements. The first phase targets North Kivu and the securing of the borders with Uganda and Rwanda to prevent FDLR attacks/flight, as well as unspecified offensive operations. The second phase will consist of operations in South Kivu, vaguely presented as an effort to contain FDLR elements present there while operations are underway in North Kivu. The Rwandan briefers reported that RDF anticipated operations lasting 15-20 days from commencement (January 21) with the possibility of requesting an extension from the GDRC if necessary.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC offered support for the operation, conditioned on being informed by the RDF/FARDC of decisions that will impact its ability to provide for civilian protection. This support would include: a joint RDF/FARDC/MONUC planning cell including 7-8 MONUC officers and the participation of civilian agencies such as OCHA, the DDR/DDRR Unit, and MONUC Civil Affairs; the establishment of a fourth regroupment center to facilitate the integration of the CNDP into the FARDC; continued training of the FARDC; and a reevaluation of MONUC force deployments to best protect civilians in North and South Kivu. MONUC specified that it would not provide day to day direct support for military operations (Note: As of January 27, a number of MONUC liaison officers were present at the RDF/FARDC headquarters in Goma. End note).

¶5. (SBU) Separately, MONUC military briefers reported a RDF base of operations located two to three kilometers west of Nyamilima. Unknown numbers of Rwandan trucks and logistical equipment were reported in Kahunga. MONUC also stated that 460 Rwandan soldiers are moving from Tongo to Kisheshe to link up with FARDC forces. 400-500 Rwandan troops were said to be moving from Bunagana towards Mabenga.

FDLR Movements

¶16. (SBU) MONUC military briefers reported on January 26 a concentration of approximately 1000 FDLR combatants in the forest near Kashebere. Unconfirmed numbers of FDLR are reported moving from Loashi and Mariki towards Masisi. MONUC military staff suggested that the FDLR may be assembling forces near Masisi to achieve greater strength but may still seek to avoid a pitched battle with combined RDF/FARDC forces. FDLR forces have vacated Bambu, Tongo, and Nyamilima. There are unconfirmed reports of FDLR fighters discarding military uniforms and dressing in civilian clothes. MONUC had unconfirmed reports of 26 civilians taken captive by FDLR combatants near Kalongo, South Kivu and is sending a team to investigate. Press reports claim that nine FDLR fighters around Lubero were killed in clashes with RDF/FARDC forces.

CNDP Integration

¶17. (SBU) Press reports quote a RDF spokesperson as saying that Nkunda, while in Rwanda, is not in jail. AP quotes Major Jill Rutaremara as saying, "Nkunda is not in jail. He is not in prison. There is a difference between arresting someone and putting him in prison. All I can say is: he is safe." Separately, a western diplomat in Goma passed on an unconfirmed report that Kigali had been ready to extradite Nkunda to the DRC, but that local commanders in Gisenyi countermanded the order.

¶18. (SBU) There are conflicting reports of the pace of CNDP integration into the FARDC. Information from USG officials in Goma and from press reports indicates that CNDP fighters have been observed in Goma and traveling with FARDC elements. However, a journalist in Goma told us that three bases in North Kivu, including one at Rumangabo, are still firmly under CNDP control. Another

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report notes a case of friction between CNDP and RDF elements; in this situation, the RDF soldiers requested some manner of assistance from the CNDP unit, and were told to keep moving. This highlights MONUC's report of SRSG Doss' emphasis that CNDP integration must happen quickly to capitalize on political developments.

Comment

¶19. (SBU) The issues of CNDP integration into the FARDC and Ntaganda's fate with respect to the ICC are likely closely linked. The CNDP under Ntaganda originally appeared to be moving quickly to allow for its fighters to be integrated into the FARDC, which would point to Ntaganda having received fairly ironclad assurances from the GDRC, especially with other former Ituri commanders so prominently in the dock at The Hague. At the same time, this one report that the CNDP is still in firm control of three bases may indicate that full demobilization and integration could still take some time.

GARVELINK